

PRELIMINARY NOTICE ON THE SONDER COLLECTION IN THE
NATIONAL HERBARIUM OF VICTORIA

by

A. B. COURT*

Almost the whole of the huge herbarium accumulated by O. W. Sonder (1812-81) lies in the general collections of the National Herbarium of Victoria, and its purchase by the Victorian Government towards the end of last century further enriched the excellent collections already acquired by Baron von Mueller. The history of its acquisition will be detailed by the author in another place and extensive notes on its contents will be published in due course. In the mean time, the following information is intended to provide a very brief guide to some of the more important elements that Sonder brought together over a period of nearly 50 years to form a collection that comprised about a quarter of a million sheets. This article also contains the first recent attestation concerning the whereabouts of the Sonder herbarium excluding the major part of his South African collection and other smaller segments and misleading assertions regarding the location of this famous herbarium are accordingly corrected.

1. *Scope.* Those regions explored principally by German botanists before about the eighth decade of last century are well represented (e.g., central Europe, South Africa, tropical South America and to a lesser extent Australia) but other regions are not so well covered. Sonder's collections embraced every major group of plants within both the cryptogams and phanerogams and contained thousands of autographic specimens from many well-known botanists.

2. *Specimens associated with Linné's Disciples.* Several hundred specimens belonging to this category have been located and most of them came from Thunberg but a few Ehrhart specimens (e.g., *Phytophylacium Ehrhartianum* and *Planta Cryptogamae Linnaea*) and about 100 Gisecke cryptogams have been noted. Two genuine Linnean specimens and one from his son have been located.

3. *Lehmann Collections.* Sonder acquired several thousand sheets from J. G. C. Lehmann including most of his *Boraginaceae* (about 800 sheets). Presumably most of the specimens associated with Linné's disciples came through Lehmann.

4. *South African Collections.* The most important components of Sonder's South African collection were acquired by Stockholm many years before Melbourne received most of the remainder which still form a very important collection.

5. *Tropical South America.* There is a strong association between Sonder's herbarium and Martius's *Flora brasiliensis* but the extent of this association is not yet fully understood. O. Berg used Sonder's *Myrtaceae* in his studies and important collectors well represented are K. Moritz, A. F. Regnell, C. F. P. Martius, F. Sellow and J. F. Widgren. The extent of the Brazilian material in Melbourne must be reckoned as substantial and should be taken into account for many studies on the flora of this and neighboring countries.

6. *Australia.* Sonder's collection of Australian plants is not as rich as those of some other regions and the two most important components are undoubtedly a good collection of L. Preiss specimens and numerous specimens transmitted to Sonder by Mueller. Most of the latter specimens returned to Melbourne when Sonder's collection was purchased.

7. *Central Europe.* Sonder's collection of central European material is extensive but it does not seem to be rich in autographic specimens.

8. *Algae.* Possibly the *Algae* formed the most important component of Sonder's collection and certainly Melbourne's holdings are extensive. Numerous autographic specimens from many well-known algologists are represented, e.g., C. A. Agardh, W. H. Harvey and Sonder himself. A comprehensive examination of the *Algae* by anyone without an extensive knowledge of the group would be imprudent at this stage because of the manner in which the material has been preserved.

9. *Ericaceae.* Evidently Sonder had resolved during the latter years of his life to study *Ericaceae* and acquired substantial collections (ca. 2,500 sheets) for examination. Amongst the most important of these were some J. C. Wendland and Thunberg types and many specimens annotated by J. C. Klotsch.

* National Herbarium of Victoria.